

COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy:

The Ultimate Guide of Talking Points to Address Patient Concerns

As primary care providers, you have the unique ability to outreach and engage your patients who have not received the vaccine. Refer to guidance from the [CDC](#), [MDH](#), and other leading organizations. Review techniques to improve conversations to address hesitancy ([Link](#)).

I am worried about the side-effects of the vaccines

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective. Millions of your fellow Marylanders have received the vaccine and enjoyed the benefits of immunity. Still, some patients experienced mild side effects after receiving the vaccine. You can learn more from the CDC [here](#).

The side effects pail in comparison to the chance of you, or a loved one, contracting COVID-19 and falling seriously ill. Side-effects do not include contracting COVID or other serious health conditions. All research indicates that getting the vaccine is the best way to protect yourself from COVID-19.

I am concerned about dangerous blood clots from the vaccines

The CDC and FDA are continually monitoring the COVID vaccination rollout for all vaccines including potential adverse reactions. This potential side effect from the J&J vaccine is extremely rare, and remains far rarer than the chance of falling seriously ill from COVID-19.

If you are concerned about receiving the J&J vaccine, there are two other vaccines available for you. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were made with different technology than the J&J vaccine and blood clotting side effects have not been shown for these two vaccines.

Patients that received the J&J vaccine within the past three weeks and develop [symptoms listed on the CDC site](#), should contact a healthcare provider. See the [CDC site](#) and [Public Health Collaborative site](#), which both include information for patients that you can be adapted for practice communications.

I am expecting or planning a family in the near future, or recently started a family, and am not sure about the vaccine

The [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#), the professional organization of OB/GYN clinicians, “recommends vaccination for all eligible people who may consider future pregnancy” and notes that “unfounded claims linking COVID-19 vaccines to infertility have been scientifically disproven.”

All three currently available COVID-19 vaccines are safe for women considering starting a family in the future. If you are not comfortable receiving the J&J vaccine due to the rare blood clotting side effects, the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are available and blood clotting side effects have not been identified for these vaccines.

The vaccine was developed quickly, I want to wait and see if it is safe

The quick development of the vaccine was not due to any corner-cutting and followed the [standard FDA approval process](#) as every vaccine before. Many factors contributed to the rapid development of the vaccines including:

- Researchers had previously been studying coronaviruses for decades and were able to get a head start in the development based on that research
- New technologies like the mRNA vaccines had been in development for years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic
- The global scientific community worked closely together in sharing information about the disease and research findings
- Some vaccines were able to combine Phase 1 and 2 trials
- No vaccination research campaign has received more money in such a short amount of time. Billions of dollars in funding was spent on accelerating the research efforts
- Many studies included large sample sizes which allowed for the trials to be conducted in a short period of time
- The government granted the ability to begin production of the leading vaccine candidates before approval. Meaning once authorized, the vaccines could be distributed immediately.

I don't think the vaccine works

The three approved vaccines are the most effective way to provide protection against COVID-19. Tens of thousands individuals received each of the vaccines in robust trials. You can read the detailed findings of the trials here: [COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness Research | CDC](#). The FDA and CDC conducted a [lengthy and complete review](#) of the vaccines before granting Emergency Use Authorization.

Since the granting authorization each of the vaccines has been taken by millions of Americans. Throughout that time, regulators and the scientific community continue to carefully monitor the effectiveness. The results during this vaccination campaign have proven to be highly effective ([Real-world studies find COVID vaccines cut infection, hospitalization - CIDRAP \(umn.edu\)](#)).

I have a health condition and am concerned about my safety

If you have concerns about a specific health condition, you can always consult your doctor. Also know that individuals with underlying conditions including diabetes, lung conditions, and obesity, are even more at risk of falling seriously ill or death after contracting COVID-19. You can learn more [here](#).

Each of the clinical trials included individuals with a broad range of conditions in testing both the efficacy and safety of the vaccines. You can find more information about the trials and conditions observed here: [Home - ClinicalTrials.gov](#).

I don't think I need the COVID vaccine

COVID-19 has devastated our world. This vaccination campaign is aimed to end this devastation by achieving [population immunity](#). This level can only be achieved if enough people get vaccinated. Even if a patient is not a high-risk individual, they can still continue the spread of the virus by not being vaccinated.

Moreover, individuals who already contracted COVID-19 do not enjoy the same levels of protection than if they are fully immunized. Re-infection has been documented in some instances and new variants of the disease continue to be uncovered.

I think other people more at risk should get the vaccine first

Maryland has expanded to Phase 3 recently because it now has enough vaccine supply to vaccinate anyone over the age of 16. Moreover, most of the highest risk populations have already been vaccinated. For example, as of April 25th over 83% of 65+ have received at least part or a full vaccine regimen.

I am worried about the cost of the vaccine

All COVID-19 vaccines are free of charge for Marylanders.

I don't trust the government

The vaccine is not a product of any public entities. The development to administration of all three vaccines were done by private companies and individuals at the forefront of the scientific community and biotechnology

- Researchers of the vaccines are all leading biotech scientists from around the world. Collectively they were able to ingeniously develop a methodology for immunizing against COVID-19
- Production of the vaccine is done by private pharmaceutical companies and sub-contractors, not the government
- Delivery of the vaccine is orchestrated by other private companies like McKesson and courier companies like UPS and FedEx
- Administration can be done by your trusted primary care provider or pharmacist, both of which are not associated with the government

Some of the nation's leading practices for effective communication styles include:

- Appeal to emotions, such as the motivation to protect oneself and loved ones along with the desire to connect with others
- Direct, clear, and common-sense-driven messages are perceived as informative and believable
- Offer advertisements/communications in multiple languages
- Refer viewers to additional resources

These responses can be extra powerful coming from a trusted advisor like a primary care provider.